

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

***San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt***

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***For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U. S. Attorney Lawrence A. Casper (619) 557-7455***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - September 17, 2007**

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Jonathan Aguilar-Lopez was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in San Diego by the Honorable Thomas J. Whelan to serve 39 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release following Aguilar-Lopez's conviction for one count of alien smuggling for financial gain. Co-defendant Jose Alberto Garcia-Quiroz was also sentenced today by Judge Whelan to serve 33 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release following Garcia-Quiroz's conviction for one count of transporting and moving illegal aliens within the United States.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Lawrence A. Casper, who prosecuted the case, the charges arose from an alien smuggling event on May 3, 2007 that resulted in a fiery vehicle crash. According to court documents, Garcia-Quiroz guided five undocumented aliens on foot and loaded them into a 2000 Pontiac Bonneville. Two of the individuals were loaded into the trunk of the vehicle while the other three were loaded into the backseat area, without seat belts or other restraints. The vehicle was then driven by Aguilar-Lopez who admitted that he traveled at speeds exceeding 100 m.p.h., ran red lights, drove into oncoming

traffic, and failed to yield to pursuing officers both before and after a controlled tire deflation device was used to stop the vehicle.

The vehicle driven by Aguilar-Lopez ultimately crashed into a Ford Expedition driven by a civilian. At the time of the crash, the vehicle driven by Aguilar-Lopez burst into flames. Aguilar-Lopez and Garcia-Quiroz climbed out of the front passenger window and were subsequently apprehended by Border Patrol Agents. The two undocumented aliens in the trunk – one of whom suffered a head wound that required medical attention and multiple stitches/staples – could not extricate themselves after Aguilar-Lopez and Garcia-Quiroz abandoned them in the burning vehicle. They were, however, removed by law enforcement responders at the accident scene who used the “jaws of life” to extricate them.

United States Attorney Hewitt commented that, “Smugglers pose a serious and unacceptable threat to motorists on our roads, to law enforcement personnel, and to the undocumented aliens themselves. We will continue to make combating these smuggling efforts one of our highest priorities.”

United States Attorney Hewitt thanked the United States Border Patrol for its work in investigating this case.

**DEFENDANTS**

**Case Number:** 07cr1240-W

Jonathan Aguilar-Lopez  
Jose Alberto Garcia-Quiroz

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) and 18 U.S.C. Section 2 – Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and Aiding and Abetting. (3 counts)  
Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) and (v)(II) – Transportation of Illegal Aliens and Aiding and Abetting. (3 counts)

**AGENCY**

U.S. Border Patrol